

**Highlight:****ERC welcomes new Bulgarian initiative to support top scientists**

27 April 2012

Over 150 participants attended an information event on the European Research Council's funding opportunities in Sofia (Bulgaria), held in parallel with the 35th Plenary Session of the ERC's Scientific Council (see [highlight](#) of 26 April 2012). This event is in line with ERC's efforts to increase the awareness of its funding opportunities in Central and Eastern Europe.

During the information event, Bulgarian Minister of Education, Research and Youth, Prof. Sergei Ignatov announced that: *"Bulgaria is launching a new initiative to financially support projects, submitted by researchers in Bulgaria, which are on the ERC's reserve lists but that were not funded for budgetary reasons"*.

ERC President Prof. Helga Nowotny welcomed the Bulgarian initiative which adds to the existing schemes to fund ERC runners-up in a number of other EU countries. She said that *"It is of great concern to the ERC that the participation rate is low in Bulgaria, and more generally in this part of Europe"* and reaffirmed the fact that *"talent exist everywhere"*.

The ERC hopes to see an increase in applications from top talent in Central and Eastern Europe. To date, similar events have been organized in Poland, Hungary, Latvia and Romania.

During a joint press conference held on 26 April, Prof. Ignatov also confirmed that Bulgaria will support the proposal of the European Commission to boost the future budget for research - including the increase of the ERC's budget by 77% in the new European research framework programme "Horizon 2020" programme.

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